

Chairman's Bio

U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall II, a West Virginia native who represents his state's third congressional district, has served on the House Natural Resources Committee for 30 years – his entire tenure in Congress. After serving as the Committee's ranking member for six years, Rahall was selected to serve as the Committee's Chairman at the start of the 110th Congress.

First elected in 1976, Chairman Rahall is currently serving his 16th term in the House of Representatives, and is recognized as the youngest elected longest serving member in the history of the House. He has received national recognition for his strong dedication to protecting and preserving our nation's environment.

As Chairman, Rep. Rahall has heralded the passage of H.R. 6, the CLEAN Energy Act of 2007, early on during the first 100 hours of the 110th Congress. Introduced by Rahall, the legislation corrected loopholes in oil and gas leases issued by the Interior Department between 1998 and 1999. If left unchanged, these loopholes could have cost the Federal Treasury an estimated \$60 billion in royalty payments over the next 25 years.

Long a leader in the effort to end royalty holidays and giveaways to big oil companies who have reaped record profits while American taxpayers continue to experience skyrocketing gas prices, Rahall and New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman issued a joint letter to the Interior Department's Inspector General (IG) in September 2006. They called for an investigation into allegations by federal auditors that the Interior Department deliberately prevented the collection of \$30 million in revenues from oil companies that were rightfully owed to the Federal Treasury. As Chairman, Rahall is committed to conducting oversight of these issues, as well as to ensuring accountability and integrity at the Department of the Interior.

Chairman Rahall has also resisted the Bush administration's unprecedented efforts to open America's treasured public lands and oceans to oil and gas drilling, and will continue to conduct oversight on the issue.

As rampant overfishing continues at unprecedented levels, experts predict that this type of unbridled depletion could cause the world to run out of seafood by 2048. In order to help prevent such a catastrophe, Rep. Rahall led the House effort to pass bipartisan legislation reauthorizing the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act just prior to the close of the 109th Congress in December 2006. This was an important step toward ensuring a healthy supply of seafood for Americans who depend on this industry, as well as protecting vital sea life. Both industry and conservation groups have applauded the passage of this legislation, which President Bush signed into law in January 2007.

Chairman Rahall is also a longtime champion of protecting landmark environmental and public participation laws, such as the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which gives the American people the right to know about and participate in

proposed federal actions. In 2006, a Government Accountability Office report requested by Rep. Rahall and several of his House and Senate colleagues confirmed the success of the ESA, which has an almost 100 percent effectiveness rate of preventing the demise of plants and animals that are so vital to human society.

Among his other accomplishments, Rahall has been a congressional leader on mining-related issues. In 1985, he assumed the chairmanship of the House Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources, a position he held until 1993. As Subcommittee Chairman, Rep. Rahall transformed what had been a moribund panel into one engaged in the aggressive oversight and reform of many of the nation's antiquated federal mining laws to bring them in line with public interest.

During this period, Rahall led the enactment of legislation overhauling the federal onshore oil and gas and geothermal stream leasing systems. He also initiated efforts to reform the Mining Law of 1872, an issue he continues to pursue today as Chairman. In 2006, Rep. Rahall worked to ensure passage of legislation that extended authorization of the Abandoned Mine Lands program, which was one of his long-running priorities.

Rahall was also a leading voice in the successful effort to defeat the administration's proposed overhaul of the National Park Service's (NPS) Management Policies of 2001, which would have dramatically altered the long-standing interpretation of laws governing the national parks. The manual covers all park planning and management issues, including land acquisition, fire management, wilderness, law enforcement, concessions, and a range of other issues.

He is additionally the author of 1978 legislation establishing the New River Gorge National River as a unit of the National Park System in southern West Virginia. Ten years later, he gained enactment of legislation to designate the Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River, in the process creating the largest network of federally protected rivers in the eastern United States.

Numerous national organizations have recognized Rahall for his work. He is the recipient of the Sierra Club's 1988 "Seneca Award" for Outstanding Environmental Stewardship, American River's 1988 "River Conservation Award," the Ansel Adams Award from the Wilderness Society in 2004, and the Mountaineer Conservation Leadership Award from the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition on Earth Day 2005.

A 33rd degree Mason, Rep. Rahall is a life member of the National Rifle Association, Elks, Moose, and the NAACP, and was made an honorary member of the United Mine Workers of America in 2003. Before his election to Congress, Rahall served as staff assistant to U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, and also made a career as a businessman. Chairman Rahall has three children: Rebecca, Nick Joe, III, and Suzanne Nicole, married to S.Sgt. U.S. Navy Chris Brown. He has one granddaughter, Madison Kaylee, and is married to the former Melinda Ross of Ashland, Kentucky.

